

Urban Redevelopment Plan

Fifth Ward Urban Redevelopment Plan

Planning Process

Under the direction of the Land Assemblage Redevelopment Authority (LARA), the City of Houston Planning and Development Department (P&D) hosted a series of community workshops to develop an Urban Redevelopment Plan. The workshops were organized to educate attendees about affordable housing issues and to gather information about their community design preferences. A community preference survey was developed to gather and evaluate the community's preferences on design issues, such as density, setback, lot size, parking access, building materials, and income ranges. All design issues relate directly to the type of housing and other land uses the community would like to see developed in the community.

The Fifth Ward workshops were held at the Fifth Ward Multi-Service Center located at 4014 Market. To ensure as many community residents as possible could attend, P&D conducted three workshops. The workshops were held Saturday, June 26, Monday, July 26 and Saturday, October 23, 2004.

P&D staff utilized numerous venues to outreach to the community regarding the meetings. Notices were sent to community civic organizations, churches, and non-profits via mail-outs, poster/flyers, email, Internet, electronic news media, radio, television and newsprint. The LARA board members played an active role by distributing fliers, contacting organizations, distributing press releases and appearing on several radio programs. The offices of Council Member Carol Mims Galloway, District B, Council Member Adrian Garcia, District H, and all at-large Council Member offices were also recruited to further publicize the

workshops. This participation underscores the LARA board's belief that only a plan that is supported by the community can be successful.

At the first workshop, 50 community attendees listened as LARA board members and P&D staff discussed the creation of LARA and affordable housing issues. Approximately 90 attended the second workshop and 105 attended the third. A total of 81 completed surveys were collected from all workshops. The results collected from all surveys are documented in the following design preference and prototypical site development. Staff incorporated elements from existing community plans into the document as well. See the **Community Involvement and Existing Community Plans** section for a listing of those plans.

On Saturday, January 29, 2005, an open house workshop was held to allow the community to review the draft plan and make comments. One hundred twenty attended this session. The draft was also posted on the Planning and Development Department's website. LARA approved the plan on April 15, 2005.

Community Involvement and Existing Community Plans

Over the past ten years, various community plans have been developed in the Fifth Ward to influence development in housing, economic development, safety, health and human services, parks and recreation, and infrastructure. These plans were developed for or by civic related non-profits, community development corporations, and religious based organizations. Below is a list of publications by the Planning and Development Department (P&D) or outside organizations independent of the City of Houston that were produced to influence and guide redevelopment activity.

- *Lyons Avenue Revitalization Plan*

The *Lyons Avenue Revitalization Plan* was produced in October 1996. It is an action plan designed to guide the revitalization of the Fifth Ward's Lyons Avenue corridor. It includes recommendations on how to make the corridor more attractive and convenient to use, how to bring back quality housing to the area, and how to encourage new retail while helping existing businesses. The plan was a joint effort between the Fifth Ward community and the City of Houston Planning and Development Department. The Department organized the effort at the request of the Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation (CRC).

- *A Fifth Ward Revitalization Strategies Plan (Western Sector)*

In April 2000, the *A Fifth Ward Revitalization Strategies Plan (Western Sector)* focused on stimulating revitalization of the western sector of Fifth Ward. The plan was initiated in 1995 as a result of a partnership between the Fifth Ward (western

sector) community and the City of Houston Planning and Development Department. The plan addressed several objectives including the development of a comprehensive housing strategy that included new single and multi-family housing as well as housing rehabilitation programs; creation of a strategy for commercial revitalization of Jensen Drive, Highway 59, Lyons Avenue and Lorraine Street; improvement of the area's infrastructure; creation of an urban beautification program; development of promotional programs to change public perception of the neighborhood; identification and promotion of educational programs; and, provision of health and social services treatment and educational programs.



LARA board members discuss neighborhood redevelopment with community participants

Educational Component

As part of a grassroots effort to identify neighborhood preferences in revitalization through creating affordable housing on tax-delinquent properties, the Planning and Development Department conducted three community workshops and open houses in Summer and Fall 2004. Over 245 area residents, businesses, civic organizations, faith-based organizations and elected officials participated in this effort. The workshops accomplished two major goals:

(1) Creating a heightened awareness about affordable housing

The City of Houston Planning and Development staff led the discussion about defining “affordable housing” by focusing on income levels of families, percentage of income available for housing costs, and housing prices. In addition, the discussion explored how density of development affects affordability of housing and how individual design elements affect the walkability and image of a neighborhood.

Key points:

- Generally, a household spending more than 30 percent of gross income on housing costs is considered to have a “housing cost burden”.
- In 2004, annual median family income for a family of four in the City of Houston was \$61,000. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development establishes income thresholds that classify families as low income (80% of median income / \$48,800), very low-income (50% of median income / \$30,500), and extremely low-income (30% of median income / \$18,300). For a full listing, see Appendix B.

- Based on typical mortgage financing practices, the maximum housing price that low-income families can afford is \$130,000; very low-income families can afford a maximum of \$85,500; and, extremely low-income families can afford a maximum of \$50,000.

(2) Collecting preferences about neighborhood design

Planning and Development staff administered a survey (see Appendix A) to identify the community’s preferences in design as well as density of redevelopment in residential areas and commercial corridors. Over 80 participants expressed their preferences on:

1. Land Use

- Single-family: One to three units per lot
- Multi-family: Four or more units per lot
- Mixed Use: Residential units and commercial units on the same lot. Commercial is often on the ground floor with residential units above.
- Commercial: Business activity per lot.

Density of development along commercial corridors:

- Medium density: Medium to small businesses along the major streets surrounded by several blocks of apartments/townhomes.
- High density: Mostly large to medium sized businesses along major streets surrounded by several residential blocks of apartments/townhomes.

2. Lot Size

- Low Density: 50-foot wide lots. About 5 units/acre, auto-oriented neighborhood with high development costs and housing prices.
- Medium Density: 25-foot wide lots. About 10 units/acre, pedestrian oriented neighborhood with reduced costs of development and lower housing prices.
- High Density: Less than 25-foot wide lots. About 20 units/acre, compact walkable neighborhood with significantly more housing units and reduced housing prices.

3. Setback

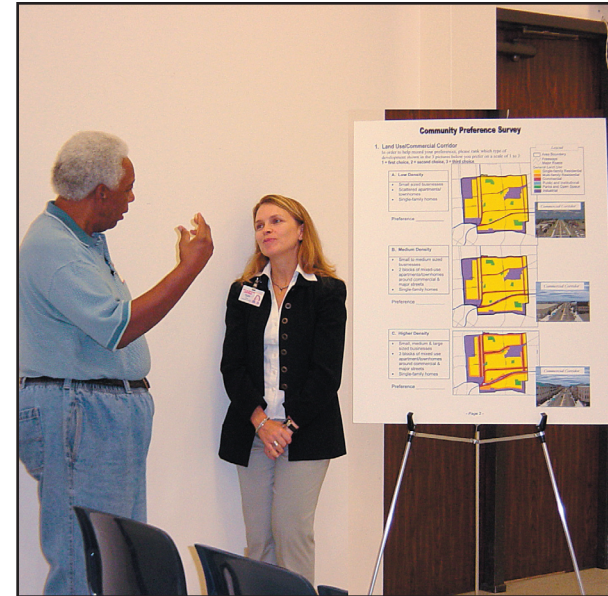
- 25-Foot: Suburban character
- 10-Foot: Mostly urban character
- 5-Foot: Urban character

4. Parking Access

- Front: Auto-dominated streets with frequent curb cuts along sidewalks and parking garages visible from the street.
- Side: Auto-oriented environment with a driveway and the garage to the rear of the property.
- Rear Alley: Pedestrian oriented streets with continuous sidewalks and enhanced walkability with parking accessible via an alley.

5. Building Materials

- Brick: Most expensive
- Tin: Moderately expensive
- Wood/Hardiplank: Least expensive



Community participant asks questions about development



Staff responds to questions regarding development

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Design Preference Survey

A Community preference survey was administered during each public workshop conducted by the Planning and Development Department staff. These surveys were designed to provide insight into residents' and stakeholders' attitudes, opinions and perceptions about types of redevelopment.

The Planning and Development staff gave an educational presentation at each workshop that provided:

1. information about LARA's history and goals, and
2. an introduction to and explanation of design and redevelopment concepts, such as density, setback and the overall appearance of development.

The community was encouraged to answer the survey questions immediately after the presentations. Staff was available to answer questions related to the survey and provide assistance.

Over 240 people attended the three workshops. Eighty-one surveys were returned representing 33 percent of those in attendance. The survey presented various design scenarios related to different categories (land use, lot size, setback, parking access and building materials). Citizens were asked to rank each of the scenarios identifying their first, second and third choices. A copy of the survey and a summary of the results are included in **Appendix A**.



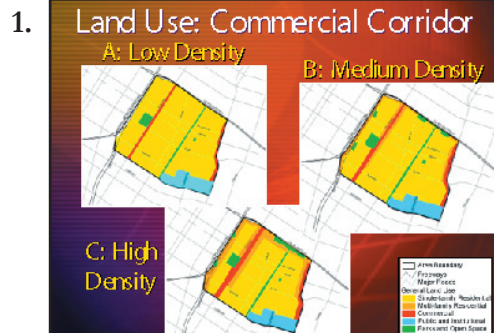
Design Preference Survey Results

The following results were collected from all respondents based on the 81 surveys gathered from the three workshops. The community preferred:

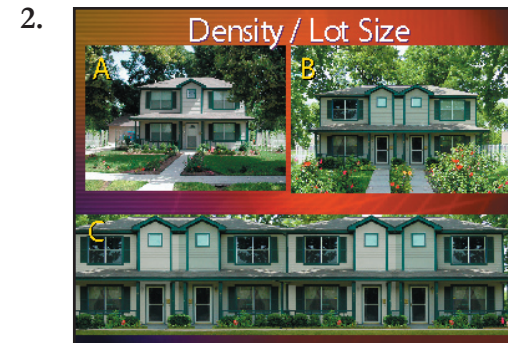
- Medium density for overall land use
- Lot sizes that were 50-feet in width
- Setbacks that were 25-feet from the city right-of-way
- Parking garages that were located in the rear and accessed from the side
- Exterior siding composed of wood

After compiling the majority responses in each category, the staff designed a prototype based on the community's preferences. See the **Prototypical Site Development** section on page 21.

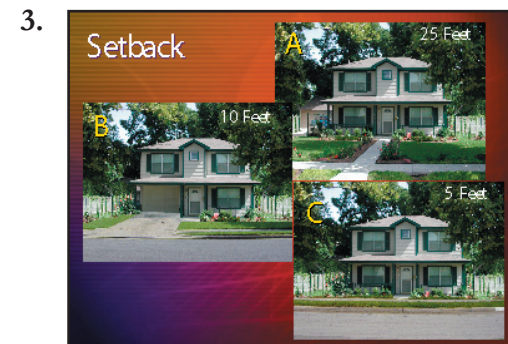
The actual percentages are as follows:



1A	1B	1C
36%	49%	15%



2A	2B	2C
55%	38%	7%



3A	3B	3C
45%	37%	17%



4A	4B	4C
36%	45%	20%



5A	5B	5C
45%	18%	38%

Prototypical Site Development

The prototypical site development is based on the first preference responses from the community preference surveys. One unusual aspect of the survey results is the community's selection of medium density for land use which is inconsistent with their other low density preferences (50-foot lot size, 25-foot setback and side parking). A medium density neighborhood would call for more townhouses, duplexes and/or apartments than single-family units and would use rear or front parking. A neighborhood made up mostly of 50-foot wide lots would tend to support a low-density neighborhood.

The prototypical land use design takes these aspects into consideration and translates these preferences into a visual map that displays more multi-family and commercial development along the Lyons, Liberty and Jensen major thoroughfares. See **Map 3.1 Prototypical Development Survey Preferences Land Use: Medium Density**. This allows the interior of neighborhoods to develop in a low-density style with the majority of lots developed as single-family units on 50-foot wide lots.

As the neighborhood continues to develop, housing on smaller than 50-foot wide lots could be built around the major corridors. This would include townhouses, patio homes, loft units, contemporary row houses, triplexes, quadraplexes, apartments or a combination of any number of these. This is represented on the land use map by the orange color. See **Map 3.1 Prototypical Development Survey Preferences Land Use: Medium Density**. Single-family units on 50-foot wide lots are represented on the land use map by the yellow color. Red represents commercial development located on major thoroughfares.

1. Land Use/Commercial Corridor: *Medium Density*

Medium density preference means small to medium sized businesses should develop along the Fifth Ward's main circulation corridors-Lyons, Liberty and Jensen Streets. Construction such as mixed use structures with ground level retail and upper level residential uses can provide cost-effective, affordable housing, increased security and increased density for a walkable environment for community residents.

Beyond the main circulation corridors, higher density multi-family residences (town homes and duplexes) should only be built within one to two blocks of the major thoroughfares. Beyond that, the area should remain primarily single-family homes.

New single-family homes should be compatible in scale, setback and exterior materials to the existing fabric of the neighborhood. The first preference of those surveyed was primarily single family homes on 50-foot wide lots with side access to a garage or carport at the rear of the property.

2. Lot size: *50-Foot wide*

A low-density neighborhood is made up mostly of 50-foot wide lots and would tend to be auto-oriented.

3. Setback: *25-Foot*

The front setbacks should offer an opportunity to create outdoor room, and encourage interaction between neighbors as well as adding to neighborhood security. Setbacks

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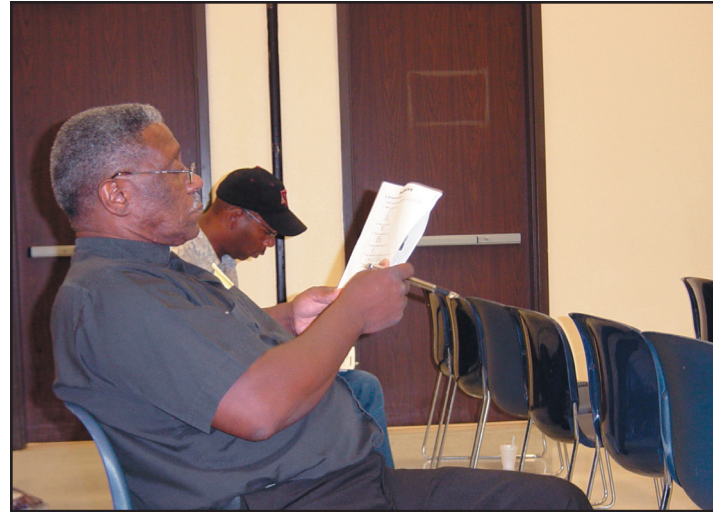
should remain consistent with the existing setback conditions in the Fifth Ward.

4. **Parking Access:** *Side Access*

Parking to the rear of the property with driveways on the side keeps car noise and maintenance behind the residence and is aesthetically appealing viewed from the street. The longer driveway, however, reduces the width, and therefore, the size in which the home may be constructed.

5. **Building Material:** *Wood Siding/Hardiplank*

New building designs should be built with materials compatible to the existing fabric of the neighborhood. Wood/Hardiplank is the preferred material for new and renovated residential structures.



Fifth Ward Community Workshop Participants

Map 3.1

Prototypical Development Survey Preferences

Land Use: *Medium Density*

- Single-family Residential
- Multi-family Residential
- Commercial
- Public & Institutional
- Parks & Open Space
- Industrial



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Map 3.2

Prototypical Development Survey Preferences:

These prototypical illustrations are developed from the first preference results of the community surveys. The community chose the following:

Lot size: 50-Foot

- * Pedestrian oriented
- * 50-foot wide lots
- * 10 units per acre



Setback: 25-Foot

- * Typical suburban
- * Front and back yard

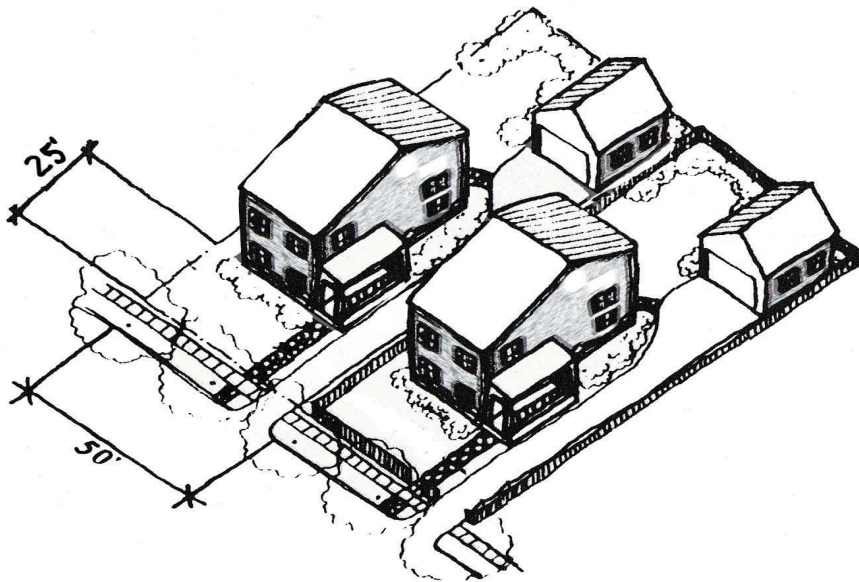


Illustration of typical site layout



Parking Access: Side Access

- * Rear parking

Building Material: Wood Siding

- * Low cost
- * Compatible to existing buildings in the neighborhood
- * Durable

